



September 2002

GOT

MEDIA



CONTROLS?

County Departments with Positive Media Relations

County departments have generated favorable media publicity by establishing innovative programs with strong controls. Some examples are:

- Environmental Services:
Restaurant Inspection Results
www.maricopa.gov/envsvc
- Animal Care and Control: Pet Mobile and Pets for Adoption
www.maricopa.gov/pets/adoptions.asp
- Library District: Bookmobiles and On-Line Services
www.maricopa.gov/library/bookmobile.asp
- Elections: Early Voting Program
<http://recorder.maricopa.gov/absentee/htm>
- Treasurer: On-line Services
<http://treasurer.maricopa.gov>
- Planning and Development: Planning/Permit Services
www.maricopa.gov/planning/permits.asp

Importance of Good Media Relations

The media looks for “interesting” stories that are good or bad. However, bad news (e.g., wasteful/excessive spending, illegal activities, fraud, etc.) is usually more interesting and attracts a larger number of viewers, listeners, and readers. Good news is often considered “no news” or a non-issue.

Given this situation, the most important media control is to develop a positive working relationship with the press and broadcasters. Good relations can minimize a bad situation, while poor relations can lead to disaster. The first step is to develop credibility and trust. When the County makes a mistake, we need to admit the mistake, tell the media how we will correct the situation, and then take the necessary actions.

“The Media Looks for the \$10,000 Toilet Seat”

Another vital control is to maintain effective communications with media outlets and develop an understanding of deadlines, which differ between radio, television, and newspapers.

Many County functions and departments are prime media targets. These include the Sheriff's Office, Courts, County Attorney, Medical Examiner, Environmental



**Al Macias,
Communications
Director**

Services, Public Health, Animal Care and Control, Public Works, Finance, contracts, and travel expenses. The County has established effective controls in these areas by utilizing knowledgeable spokespersons, employee training, and formal procedures. The County's Public Information Request Policy (A2000) also provides a good safety net.

Through effective media controls, the City of Phoenix has enhanced its image of a well run organization. A prime example is the city's Fire Department, which generates positive publicity with frequent programming on the Phoenix Channel.



Minimizing a Bad Situation Through Good Media Controls

US states and cities have recently experienced tragic events that would have been even more catastrophic if effective media controls had not been implemented. Three examples are: • City of New York's handling and follow-up of the 911 disaster - Mayor Giuliani continually met with and updated the media regarding all developments. • State of Pennsylvania's actions to the accident that trapped miners almost 300 feet underground - Governor kept continuous on-site presence and made himself available throughout the rescue. • US Forest Service's work containing Arizona's Rodeo-Chediski Fire - Jim Paxson's daily status reports and media interviews generated favorable publicity.

Contact Internal Audit for internal control support at (602) 506-1585